

How We Got Our Bible

ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE

A. Divine Source – From God

B. Human Writers

1. God used about forty men to write the Bible. The time the forty men wrote the Bible is about fifteen hundred years, from 1400 B.C. to A.D. 100.
2. The men who wrote the Bible were guided by the mind of God. Some of the writers wrote down exactly what God had told them. Some of the writers wrote what they had seen. Some of the writers wrote down what they had learned from other people. Some of the writers probably used writings from before. But all the writers were specially guided by the Spirit of God. Inspired men wrote God's Word for us.

C. Purpose of This Lesson

This lesson is a study of how we got the Bible.

1. God inspired the original writers of the Bible. The people who copied the Bible or translated the Bible could make mistakes.

2. We still have many very, very old hand-written books of the Bible. We also have many very, very old translations of the Bible.

ANCIENT VERSIONS AND MANUSCRIPTS

We don't have any part of the Bible in the original author's handwriting. We have two kinds of sources where we can learn. These are called *manuscripts* and *versions*.

A. Definitions

1. **Manuscripts** are documents written by hand. We do not have any Bible manuscripts written by the original authors. We use the word *manuscripts* to mean copies written by hand in the same language used by the original writers.
2. A **version** is a translation of any document into another language.

B. Old Testament Scriptures

1. *Manuscripts*. The Old Testament books were written in the Hebrew language between 1400 B.C. and 400 B.C. The oldest Bible manuscripts now known are from the Dead Sea scrolls. The Dead Sea scrolls were found in caves near the Dead Sea in 1947.
2. *Versions*. The oldest version of the Old Testament is a Greek version called the *Septuagint*. *Septuagint* is from a Latin word that means *seventy*. The Septuagint was translated in Alexandria, Egypt about 250 B.C. There were also ancient versions translated into many other languages.

C. New Testament Scriptures

1. *Manuscripts*. All the books of the New Testament were written in Greek during the first 100 years after Christ. The oldest New Testament manuscripts that we have were copied around A.D. 350.

One of the oldest manuscripts ever found is now in the British Museum.

The other oldest manuscript we have is in the library of the Vatican.

There are more than a hundred other manuscripts from the fifth to the tenth century. These manuscripts are called *uncial* manuscripts. Uncial is from a Latin word for inch. In the ninth and tenth centuries a new style of writing was developed, using small letters. This kind of writing is called *cursive* or running.

2. *Versions*. A more careful version of the Bible was translated into Latin about AD400. The Latin version was called The Vulgate. Vulgate means common or popular.

ENGLISH VERSIONS

A. Old English Versions

There were people in the British Isles in the early days of the church, but the English people and the English language developed later. There was a need for God's Word in their native language.

1. In 735 the Gospel of John was translated into Anglo-Saxon language.
2. About 900, King Alfred translated portions of the Bible.
3. About 1380 Wycliffe and his team of coworkers translated the Bible into Middle English. These early translations were translated from the Latin Vulgate.
4. In 1525 William Tyndale translated an English version of the New Testament. In the following years he added translations of Old Testament books. Tyndale translated directly from the original Greek and Hebrew.

5. English churchmen were angry with Tyndale. They did not want him to translate. Finally both the churchmen and the king of England (Henry VIII) approved the translation made by Myles Coverdale in 1535.
6. When Mary Tudor became queen of England, she was very against the English Bible.
7. The bishops of the Church of England were offended by some of the notes in the margins in the most recent English Bible, the Geneva Bible. They produced a new version of their own. This "Bishops' Bible" was published in 1568.
8. In 1604, King James appointed a committee of fifty-four scholars to prepare a new version. The committee worked very hard and produced the King James Version. It was published in 1611. The King James Version is still the most used Bible in the English language.

B. Revised English Versions

Any living language is constantly changing. Many words used in the King James Version are now almost unknown.

1. Over many hundred years, scholars began to see a need to revise the King James Version. In 1885 a *Revised Version* was produced by a committee of fifty-one British scholars, assisted by thirty-two Americans.
2. In 1901 the American members of the committee brought out the *American Standard Version*, introducing some variations that fit with American usage of English.

C. Modern English Versions

1. Many modern translations have been produced.
2. The *Revised Standard Version*, completed in 1952, is the work of a committee of American scholars.
3. *The New English Bible*, prepared by a British committee, was completed in 1961.
4. The *New American Standard Version* was published in 1963.
5. The *New International Version* was completed in 1978.
6. *The New King James Version* was introduced in 1982.
7. The *New Century Version* was introduced in 1987.